

Amendments of the Claims

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the above-identified patent application.

Listing of Claims

1. (Currently amended) A method of exercising access control over a television program ~~using a parental control user interface having different functions that are available to a user in a master mode of operation~~, said method comprising the steps of:

inputting a password for entering into ~~[[the]]~~ a master mode of operation ~~for obtaining access to the functions of the parental control user interface;~~

for a first mode of operation different from the master mode:

entering a blocking criterion for blocking a television program from being ~~viewed or recorded;~~ accessed by a user in the first mode of operation,

entering an unblocking criterion for unblocking a blocked television program to ~~be viewed or recorded~~ permit, without providing the password, access to the blocked program by the user in the first mode of operation if the blocked program meets the unblocking criterion; and

for a second mode of operation different from the master mode:

selecting a ~~plurality of~~ one or more programs for ~~[[viewing or recording;]]~~ access by a user in the second mode of operation, and

~~prompting the user not in the master mode to enter the password if the selected plurality of programs meet the blocking criterion and do not meet the unblocking criterion; and~~

~~unlocking the selected plurality of programs that meet the blocking criterion and do not meet the unblocking criterion so they can be viewed or recorded, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt~~

permitting only the selected programs to be accessed in the second mode without providing the password, to the exclusion of all other programs being telecast.

2-9. (Canceled)

10. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the password is established by a first-time user.

11. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the password can be changed by a user when in the master mode.

12. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the password can be changed by repeatedly entering an incorrect password for a predetermined number of times and confirming the repeatedly entered password at the end of the entering step.

13. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the master mode of operation remains in effect until a television configured to display the television program is turned off, the user exits the master mode, or a time delay expires.

14. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 ~~wherein the parental control functions include a power outage function to~~ further comprising denying access to a television configured to display the television program until the password is properly entered, after a power outage.

15. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the blocking and unblocking criteria are entered in a normal television picture viewing mode using an on-screen menu.

16. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the blocking and unblocking criteria are entered in a guide mode using an on-screen menu activated from a program schedule guide.

17. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the ~~steps of entering the criteria comprise: selecting a set of television programs to be watched or recorded in~~ second mode of operation is a babysitting mode; and permitting only the selected set to be watched or recorded in the babysitting mode without inputting the password, to the exclusion of all other programs being telecast.

18. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the steps of entering the criteria comprise:

selecting a television program to be ~~watched or recorded~~ accessed in the first mode of operation;

activating a first on-screen button to block the selected program if the selected program is unblocked; and

activating a second on-screen button to unblock the selected program if the selected program is blocked.

19. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the steps of entering the criteria comprise:

tuning to a television program;

activating a first on-screen button to block the television program if the program is unblocked; and

activating a second on-screen button to unblock the television program if the program is blocked.

20. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of entering the blocking criterion comprises inputting a parental control level, the method further comprising:

~~and the prompting step comprises~~ extracting a parental control rating from a television signal carrying the selected program, comparing the rating with the parental control level, and blocking the selected program if its rating falls below the parental control level.

21. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein one of the criteria is blocking a television channel or television program, or unblocking a blocked television channel or television program.

22. (Previously presented) The method of claim 21 wherein the blocked or unblocked television channel or program is marked in a parental control review list.

23. (Previously presented) The method of claim 22 wherein the steps of entering the criteria comprise editing the parental control review list with respect to channel, date, time and length.

24. (Previously presented) The method of claim 16 wherein the on-screen menu includes a grid feature for blocking or unblocking all television channels whether or not the channels are already blocked or unblocked, a sort feature for blocking or unblocking all television programs in a category, and a time feature for blocking or unblocking by a time of a day or a day of a week.

25. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising providing access to a predetermined set of functions specified in a user profile if the user does not enter the password.

26. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising restoring the blocking criterion after the user is no longer in the master mode.

27. (Currently amended) An apparatus for parental control of a television comprising:
~~a microprocessor;~~
~~a parental control user interface having different functions for activating the~~
~~microprocessor;~~

means for inputting a password for entering into a master mode of operation ~~to obtain~~
~~access to the functions of the parental control user interface;~~

means for entering a blocking criterion for blocking a television program from being
~~viewed or recorded;~~ accessed by a user in a first mode of operation.

means for entering an unblocking criterion for unblocking a blocked television program
to permit, without providing the password, access to the blocked program by the user in the first
mode of operation if the blocked program meets the unblocking criterion;

means for selecting ~~a plurality of~~ one or more programs for ~~viewing or recording~~; access
by a user in a second mode of operation, and

means for permitting only the selected programs to be accessed in the second mode
without providing the password, to the exclusion of all other programs being telecast; and

~~means for prompting a user not in the master mode to enter the password if the selected~~
~~plurality of programs meet the blocking criterion and do not meet the unblocking criterion;~~

~~means for unblocking the selected plurality of programs that meet the blocking criterion~~
~~and do not meet the unblocking criterion so they can be viewed or recorded, if the user enters the~~
~~password responsive to the prompt; and~~

means for restoring the blocking criterion after the user is no longer in the master mode.

28. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the master mode of operation remains in effect until the television is turned off, the user exits the master mode, or a time delay expires.

29. (Canceled)

30. (Currently amended) The ~~method~~ apparatus of claim ~~[[29]]~~ 27, further comprising
means for entering a ~~third~~ second blocking criterion for blocking television programs from being
~~viewed or recorded~~ accessed.

31. (Currently amended) A method of exercising access control over a television ~~using a~~
~~parental control user interface having different functions that are available to a user in a master~~
~~mode of operation~~, said method comprising the steps of:

inputting a password for entering into ~~[[the]]~~ a master mode of operation, ~~for obtaining~~
~~access to the functions of the parental control user interface~~ wherein the master mode of
operation remains in effect until the television is turned off, the user exits the master mode, or a
time delay expires;

for a first mode of operation different from the master mode;

entering a first blocking criterion for blocking a television program from being ~~viewed or recorded~~; accessed by a user in the first mode of operation,

entering an unblocking criterion for unblocking a blocked television program to ~~be viewed or recorded~~; permit access to the blocked program by the user in the first mode of operation, if the blocked program meets the unblocking criterion; and

for a second mode of operation different from the master mode:

selecting a ~~program~~ one or more programs for ~~viewing or recording~~; access by a user in the second mode of operation, and

~~prompting the user not in the master mode to enter the password if the selected program meets the blocking criterion and does not meet the unblocking criterion; and~~

~~unlocking the selected program that meets the blocking criterion and does not meet the unblocking criterion so it can be viewed or recorded, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt, wherein the master mode of operation remains in effect until the television is turned off, the user exits the master mode, or a time delay expires~~

permitting only the selected programs to be accessed in the second mode without providing the password, to the exclusion of all other programs being telecast.

32. (Currently amended) The method of claim 31, further comprising entering a second blocking criterion for blocking television programs from being ~~viewed or recorded~~ accessed in the first mode of operation.

33. (Currently amended) A method of exercising access control over a television ~~using a parental control user interface having different functions that are available to a user in a master mode of operation~~, said method comprising the steps of:

inputting a password for entering into ~~[[the]]~~ a master mode of operation ~~for obtaining access to the functions of the parental control user interface;~~

~~entering a criterion for unblocking a blocked television program to be viewed or recorded;~~

selecting a ~~plurality of~~ one or more television programs for ~~viewing or recording~~ access by a user in a viewing mode different from the master mode; and

~~unlocking the selected plurality of programs if the selected programs are blocked~~
~~television programs that meet the unblocking criterion~~

permitting only the selected programs to be accessed in the viewing mode without
providing the password, to the exclusion of all other programs being telecast.

34. (Currently amended) A method of exercising access control over a television ~~using a~~
~~parental control user interface having different functions that are available to a user in a master~~
~~mode of operation~~, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving a password for entering into ~~[[the]]~~ a master mode of operation ~~for obtaining~~
~~access to the functions of the parental control user interface;~~

storing a first criterion for blocking a television program~~[[s]]~~ from being ~~viewed or~~
~~recorded~~ accessed by a user in a first mode of operation different from the master mode, based
on stored information relating to the television program~~[[s]]~~;

storing a second criterion for unblocking a blocked television program ~~programs blocked~~
~~by the first criterion for blocking from being viewed or recorded~~ to permit, without providing the
password, access to the blocked program by a user in the first mode of operation if the blocked
program meets the second criterion;

receiving a user selection ~~for a program for viewing or recording~~ of one or more
programs for access by a user in a second mode of operation different from the master mode; and

~~unlocking the selected program so it can be viewed or recorded, if the selected program~~
~~meets both the first criterion for blocking and the second criterion for unblocking~~

permitting only the selected programs to be accessed in the second mode without
providing the password, to the exclusion of all other programs being telecast.

35. (Currently amended) The method of claim 34, further comprising storing a third
criterion for blocking television programs from being ~~viewed or recorded~~ accessed in the first
mode of operation.

36. (Currently amended) A method of exercising access control over a television ~~using a parental control user interface having different functions that are available to a user in a master mode of operation~~, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving a password for entering into ~~[[the]]~~ a master mode of operation, ~~for obtaining access to the functions of the parental control user interface wherein the master mode of operation remains in effect until the television is turned off, the user exits the master mode, or a time delay expires;~~

storing a first criterion for blocking a television program[[s]] from being ~~viewed or recorded~~ accessed by a user in a first mode of operation different from the master mode, based on stored information relating to the television program[[s]];

storing a second criterion for unblocking a blocked television program ~~programs blocked by the first criterion for blocking from being viewed or recorded to permit, without providing the password, access to the blocked program by a user in the first mode of operation if the blocked program meets the second criterion;~~

receiving a user selection ~~for a program for viewing or recording of one or more programs for access by a user in a second mode of operation different from the master mode;~~ and

~~unblocking the selected program so it can be viewed or recorded, if the selected program meets both the first criterion for blocking and the second criterion for unblocking, wherein the master mode of operation remains in effect until the television is turned off, the user exits the master mode, or a time delay expires~~

permitting only the selected programs to be accessed in the second mode without providing the password, to the exclusion of all other programs being telecast.

37. (Currently amended) The method of claim 36, further comprising storing a third criterion for blocking television programs from being ~~viewed or recorded~~ accessed in the first mode of operation.

38. (Currently amended) An apparatus for parental control of a television comprising:
a ~~microprocessor;~~

~~a parental control user interface having different functions for activating the microprocessor;~~

means for inputting a password for entering into ~~[[the]]~~ a master mode of operation ~~for obtaining access to the functions of the parental control user interface;~~

~~means for entering a first criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded;~~

~~means for entering a second criterion for unblocking blocked television programs to be viewed or recorded;~~

means for selecting ~~a program for viewing or recording~~ one or more television programs for access by a user in a viewing mode different from the master mode; and

~~means for prompting the user not in the master mode to enter the password if the selected program meets the blocking criterion and does not meet the unblocking criterion; and~~

~~means for unblocking the selected program that meets the blocking criterion and does not meet the unblocking criterion so it can be viewed, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt~~

means for permitting only the selected programs to be accessed in the viewing mode without providing the password, to the exclusion of all other programs being telecast.

39. (Currently amended) An apparatus for parental control of a television comprising:

~~a microprocessor;~~

~~a parental control user interface having different functions for activating the microprocessor;~~

means for receiving a password for entering into ~~[[the]]~~ a master mode of operation ~~for obtaining access to the functions of the parental control user interface;~~

means for storing a first criterion for blocking a television program~~[[s]]~~ from being viewed or recorded accessed by a user in a first mode of operation different from the master mode, based on stored information relating to the television program~~[[s]]~~;

means for storing a second criterion for unblocking a blocked television program ~~programs blocked by the first criterion for blocking from being viewed or recorded~~ to permit,

without providing the password, access to the blocked program by a user in the first mode of operation if the blocked program meets the second criterion;

means for receiving a user selection for a program for viewing or recording of one or more programs for access by a user in a second mode of operation different from the master mode; and

means for unblocking the selected program so it can be viewed or recorded, if the selected program meets both the first criterion for blocking and the second criterion for unblocking

means for permitting only the selected programs to be accessed in the second mode without providing the password, to the exclusion of all other programs being telecast.

40. (New) The apparatus of claim 39, further comprising:

means for selecting a program for access by a user not in the master mode;

means for determining whether the selected program is blocked from access;

means for prompting the user to enter the password if the selected program is blocked from access; and

means for unblocking the selected program for access, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt.

41. (New) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

selecting a program for access by a user not in the master mode;

determining whether the selected program is blocked from access;

prompting the user to enter the password if the selected program is blocked from access;

and

unblocking the selected program for access, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt.

42. (New) The apparatus of claim 27, further comprising:

means for selecting a program for access by a user not in the master mode;

means for determining whether the selected program is blocked from access;

means for prompting the user to enter the password if the selected program is blocked from access; and

means for unblocking the selected program for access, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt.

43. (New) The method of claim 31, further comprising:

selecting a program for access by a user not in the master mode;

determining whether the selected program is blocked from access;

prompting the user to enter the password if the selected program is blocked from access;

and

unblocking the selected program for access, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt.

44. (New) The method of claim 33, further comprising:

selecting a program for access by a user not in the master mode;

determining whether the selected program is blocked from access;

prompting the user to enter the password if the selected program is blocked from access;

and

unblocking the selected program for access, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt.

45. (New) The apparatus of claim 38, further comprising:

means for selecting a program for access by a user not in the master mode;

means for determining whether the selected program is blocked from access;

means for prompting the user to enter the password if the selected program is blocked from access; and

means for unblocking the selected program for access, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt.